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Approved For Release 2003/11/19 : CIA-RDP54-00216A000100040025-8

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENTTO : Room 1301, "I" Building

DATE: 9 September 1952

FROM : OCI

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Southeast Asia Area Program, conducted by the Office of Training, summer 1952

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

In principle, the concept of area programs is a sound one, but in practice, the Southeast Asian Program given this summer fell far short of the ideal. The value of the program would be tremendously increased by more advanced treatment of the subject matter; by more emphasis upon interpretation than upon facts; by a greater use of seminar discussions; by a lengthening of the duration of the course; and by improving the physical conditions under which the course is given.

DETAILED EVALUATION

Value in increasing analyst effectiveness: If the program is carefully planned and well carried out, it should increase analyst effectiveness. To be more fully effective, however, the program must be designed so as to equip him with new insights into the broad trends and problems of the area and to increase his understanding of the historical and contemporary significance of the area in relation to the world picture as a whole.

Usefulness of program given this summer: While it is true that I absorbed a limited amount of new factual information and gained some new insights into the more general problems of the area, in all frankness the program did not measure up to anticipated standards. Many of the lectures were poorly prepared and incoherent, and seemed designed more for beginning college students than for professional personnel. Several of the lecturers emphasized one or two countries concerning which they had special competence and interest with the result that continental Southeast Asia, in particular, was badly neglected. While recognizing the difficulty of giving a balanced regional course in a few short lectures, I believe that careful capsulization and organization of the material at hand would greatly have improved some of the lectures.

Content and scope of subject matter: In the sense that any additional factual background material and any additional interpretive tools aid me in evaluating day to day occurrences, it must in justice be said that the subject matter was relevant to my duties. Much of the material presented, however, was of such an elementary nature that it was already an integral part of my basic knowledge of Southeast Asia. The value of the course would be greatly enhanced if it were set at a more advanced level, with more emphasis upon interpretation of broad trends and development of the new conceptual tools necessary for the proper assessment of current factual data in the light of Southeast Asia's history and world position.

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Manner and method of presentation: There is no basic quarrel with the manner and method of presentation. The physical conditions, however, under which the lectures were given were quite rigorous. The classroom was extremely hot and uncomfortable, making attendance somewhat of an ordeal and proper concentration on the lectures very difficult.

Time allotted for course: The period of two hours per session would not have been unreasonable had the classroom been more comfortable. The number of weeks allotted for the course, however, was inadequate. At least twice as long a period could have been used to great advantage, considering the broadness of the program's scope.

Balance between lecture and discussion: There was little discussion in the course under evaluation. Carefully planned and skillfully led discussion periods would add greatly to the value of the program.

The problem of required reading: Since most of the participants are carrying a regular work load, the policy of not giving assignments is a sound one. Moreover, it may be presumed that the analyst will on his own initiative use whatever opportunity he has to increase his value to his office by further research and study.



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